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Pro and Con

# Let CIA, FBI Spy on Americans

**YES—"The threat from terrorism and violence is real"**



**Interview With  
Senator  
John P. East**  
Republican,  
Of North Carolina

**Q** Senator East, why do you favor easing restrictions on efforts by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency to gather intelligence on domestic terrorists?

**A** The threat from terrorism and violence to the fundamental security of our free society is real. But in trying to deal with what may have been occasional abuses by federal agents, officials in 1976 developed guidelines that have hindered the FBI's ability to track and investigate violence-prone groups.

Now the pattern of terrorist violence is mounting in the world, and the potential for terrorism in the United States is becoming greater. We need to give the government adequate tools to investigate individuals and groups that have the potential for evolving into violence-prone or terrorist-prone organizations.

**Q** Exactly which limits need to be loosened?

**A** Under the 1976 guidelines, in order for the FBI to investigate an individual or an organization to determine potential for violence and terrorism, it must show that acts of violence have been committed or are about to be committed. So it's in a Catch-22 situation, where it has to prove at the outset of the investigation the very thing the investigation is designed to prove.

That unduly restricts the FBI and gives an enormous advantage to individuals who flirt with violence and terror. Elements of this kind don't play by the queen's rules. But we have the FBI in the position of merely being firemen, of merely reacting to crisis and not being able to prevent the crisis.

**Q** Doesn't the Weather Underground case show that radical groups are small and not very dangerous to this country as a whole?

**A** We need to be able to track these groups to make sure that at some point we aren't confronted with an extensive threat made up of a phalanx of groups. They may be small at this point, but what about in six or eight months or a year? If we have no capacity to track them, we're simply acting on faith that nothing will come of them.

**Q** Are you suggesting that violent radicals deserve more attention than ordinary nonpolitical criminals, who are far more numerous?

**A** The evils I'm especially concerned about are the acts of violence committed out of an ideological motivation. Two

**NO—"The conduct of intelligence agencies" has been "shocking"**



**Interview With  
Representative  
Don Edwards**  
Democrat,  
Of California

**Q** Representative Edwards, why do you oppose lifting curbs on domestic-intelligence gathering by the FBI and the CIA?

**A** The CIA is not supposed to gather intelligence within the United States, and there is no evidence of an increasing terrorist threat to justify a change. The current guidelines affecting the FBI's domestic-intelligence gathering have been working very well and have not hampered the bureau's operations. FBI Director William Webster has testified to that.

As a matter of fact, terrorism in the United States is declining. The terrorist bombings that once occurred at a rate of 100 a year went down to 20 in 1980. And the FBI's priorities list now has domestic terrorism at No. 12 or 13. The problem is steadily getting smaller in this country, I'm happy to say.

Before the current rules were put into effect, there were terrible abuses. A General Accounting Office audit of the FBI's domestic-intelligence activities from 1952 to 1975 found there had been hundreds of thousands of investigations. It was a terrible waste, taking about 20 percent of the FBI's time for no good reason. Nothing good ever came out of it. Very few criminals were caught, all for crimes not connected with internal security. All that happened was that Americans' rights were violated.

**Q** Doesn't the Weather Underground case show that authorities now know so little about terrorists that they are unable to deal with them until a violent act has been carried out?

**A** No. The Brink's-robbery incident is the tail end of crimes by people who were active a number of years ago and who the FBI believes have no foreign connections and no real network. It appears that Katherine Boudin was on welfare, so she didn't have a lot of money from other crimes. This crime that she and the others incompetently tried to commit was terrible, but they appear to be common street criminals. The rather spectacular rhetoric they spout makes it appear to some people that they are a threat, but so far there is no evidence that there is any foreign connection or widespread ring of conspirators.

**Q** There is evidence that some radical groups have been involved in plots to murder law-enforcement officers and make bombs. Is there any way to prevent such actions?

**A** Yes. Those are violations of law. People who conspire to commit those crimes or who actually commit them should be arrested. The facts show the FBI and the police are dealing with these people in a competent manner. I deplore every single bombing that does happen in the U.S.

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